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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

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Bright-Colored Play Suits for  
Children, A Safeguard Against  
Motor Accidents

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, and broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, October 10, 1935.

--ooOoo--

MR. SALISBURY: Now, Miss Van Deman, I'm going to turn the microphone right over to you. The Farm and Home Hour is yours to do with as you will, for five whole minutes.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, but don't run off. You're in on this today. Don't you own and drive a car?

MR. SALISBURY: Yes. I do own and drive a car.

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right. I won't ask you whether you've signed a safety pledge. But as a driver of a motor car, wouldn't it be easier for you to see and keep your eye on children playing by the road if they were dressed in bright clothes?

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, a youngster dressed in bright red, say, would stand out on the landscape and be a lot easier for the motorist to spot. Why don't you offer that as a suggestion in a safety campaign, Miss Van Deman? You might get a prize.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Never mind the prize. All I'm interested in is preventing some of these ghastly tragedies along the roadside. And don't give me the credit for the idea. I got it from our clothing specialists.

Sometime ago they suggested bright-colored play suits for youngsters of nursery school age, and a lot of mothers took up the idea and found it very practical. The children themselves loved the gay colors. Then came a turn in fashion, one of those things that nobody can give any rhyme or reason for, just change for the sake of change it seems. The result was that last winter most of the little tackers went out to play in dark, dull colors -- navy blue, brown, olive drab, maroon, the shade of maroon grandmother might choose for a dress because it is so quiet and inconspicuous. Even the plaid in some of these suits didn't compel the eye. It was about as somber as the tartan of that famous old regiment of Scottish Highlanders, the Black Watch. Probably you've seen a piece of that tartan, uneven squares of dark green, midnight blue, and black.

MR. SALISBURY: Can't say I'm acquainted with that particular tartan. But it sounds like a color scheme to make a Scottish chief practically invisible in his Highland glen. Part of his protection against the stranger who might draw his bow and shoot on sight.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN: Exactly. And just the reverse of protection for a little child along a modern motor highway, when to be seen is not to be hit.

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, times change and so do customs. I suppose nowadays when a twentieth century Scotchman goes out to stalk a deer he puts on a bright red coat, the way American hunters do in the north woods. The deer have their protective coloration that makes them one with the woods. But the hunters need red coats to distinguish them from the deer.

MISS VAN DEMAN: A very neat illustration of my point. In this machine age, we're having to develop a technic of protecting ourselves.

MR. SALISBURY: Very true. Well, to get back to those bright-colored clothes for children. Are you sure little fellows like to wear them?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Perfectly sure if several in a group are doing it. Of course no child wants to wear clothes that make him conspicuous in his group. I don't know what colors the ready-made play suits are coming in this winter, but anybody who is clever at sewing can make a very smart one at home. Clarice Scott and Margaret Smith of our clothing division have worked out an excellent design for a one-piece winter play suit for a small child. It's loose enough for a youngster to play leap frog in, but it's not baggy and clumsy. All the little details are thought out. A slide fastener down the front that a child loves to operate. Knit wristlets and anklets that fit snugly and keep out the damp and cold but don't hamper a little chap when he is climbing into and out of his suit by himself. Darts cleverly worked in at the waistband at the back to give room in the seat for bending. These are just a few of the practical points about a good play suit.

To go back to the bright-colored material for the suit. Be sure to get one that is color fast and that will wash or dry clean satisfactorily. I've seen beautiful blue and red cotton suede that answers both those requirements, and there are good woolen fabrics to be had.

Now let me add just this. What set me to thinking about these bright-colored play suits this week is a slogan I saw the other day as part of the safety campaign for motorists. It read: "Children should be seen and not hurt."

MR. SALISBURY: Hurt, did you say, Miss Van Deman?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, "hurt" --h-u-r-t. "Children should be seen and not hurt!"

MR. SALISBURY: Well, you've certainly offered a practical suggestion to that end. Miss Van Deman, just a question before you go in the interests of any woman who wants to make one of those little suits you described. Your bureau doesn't furnish patterns, does it?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, we just work out the designs and then commercial companies make them up into patterns and put them on sale through their regular retail services. All we do is distribute descriptions and pictures of the designs.

MR. SALISBURY: You'll answer questions from anybody who is interested, won't you?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, indeed. Glad to. I've certainly been interested in the letters from the PTA presidents, and the school trustees, and cafeteria managers who've written for the recipes to serve school lunches to 50 children. I certainly wish them all good luck. And until next time, Goodbye, Everybody.